

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

Homes for Life Housing Partnership  
57 Market Street  
HADDINGTON  
East Lothian  
EH41 3JG  
Tel 01620 829300  
Fax 01620 829993



*October 2008*

## **OFFICE OPENING TIMES**

MONDAY – THURSDAY 9.00AM  
TO 5.00PM

FRIDAY 9.00AM TO 4.00PM

Contact us on 01620 829300  
[www.homesforlife.co.uk](http://www.homesforlife.co.uk)

## **10th Annual General Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008**



**Thank you to all the tenants who attended our very successful 10th Annual General Meeting held in the Rocks Hotel in Dunbar**

We will shortly be going out to tender for a number of Services: Reactive Repairs, Gas Heating Servicing/ Maintenance and Landscape Maintenance. **Please see page 5 for how to be part of this and watch out for further information and potential new phone numbers**

## **Diary note :**

**Tenant Panel Meeting  
12th November 6pm**

## **SPECIAL RESOLUTION – CHANGES TO THE COMPANY'S MEMORANDUM & ARTICLES**

A full copy of the **Special Resolution and proposed revised Memorandum & Articles** were circulated prior to the meeting.

Tom Mitchell gave a presentation. Tom is the consultant who was commissioned to advise the Board on changes necessary to address the Governance issues raised in the Final Inspection Report of May 2007 by Communities Scotland, (now the Scottish Housing Regulator). The changes to our Memorandum & Articles are intended to ensure stable, competent, and independent governance of the Company to better meet the challenges of a Registered Social Landlord. Tom's presentation covered the background to this review and the key revisions.

## **CONTENTS**

AGM	1
Key Revisions	2
Any Changes Prize	5
Housing Benefit Changes	5
Tenant Panel meeting	5
Repairs Telephone Nos.	6

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

## Key Revisions Included:

- **termination of the special status of our two 'founder members'** East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association, together with their rights to each appoint directors;
- termination of different classes of membership;
- changes to provisions on the number of directors, their appointment and termination -with overall board increased from a maximum of 14 to 15;
- introduction of requirement that only members can be elected as directors (though non members can be co-opted);
- increased scope for election of tenant directors-with new requirement that tenants must make up the majority of the board;
- increased scope for appointment of specialist co-options-maximum up from 2 to 1/3rd of board;
- improved arrangements to fill any casual vacancies for directors which arise between General meetings through appointment by the Board;
- changes to the quorum required for general meetings-up from 4 members to 10% of membership.

After the presentation there was an opportunity to ask Tom questions, the Resolution proposing the changes was then be put to a vote, and was **passed by 100% of those members present and voting.**

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, DIRECTOR'S AND EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORTS

The Financial statements had already been approved by the Board for statutory returns, and were presented by Donald Forsyth, a representative from our Finance Agents, Scott Moncrieff. There was an opportunity to ask questions after this presentation. **Full copies of the Financial Statements are available from the office on request.**

## APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

**Chiene and Tait were re-appointed** as our external auditors.

## ELECTIONS TO BOARD

The outcome of the approved resolution will be that the 6 remaining Directors appointed by ELC and ELHA will cease to be directors with effect from registration of the new Articles. This will leave a core of 6 elected directors who will appoint up to 9 further directors to ensure a full Board with relative skills/expertise etc. At present 4 people have expressed interest in being appointed.

It is important that the Board contains a good spread and depth of experience and skills. **To ensure that tenants' best interests remain at the core of our governance, we need more tenants to become directors to complement those who are already involved.**

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

To replace some of our more experienced appointed directors **we will also be looking to co-opt others who have significant legal, financial, or other specialist expertise.** Generally directors need only commit to preparation for and attendance at only one meeting per month, but are also expected to keep up to date with changes to good practice guidance and legislation. Induction and follow on training is available and can be tailored to individual needs.

**Expressions of interest are sought from tenants or others who would like to become involved. Expressions need to be received by Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October.**

## REVIEW OF YEAR AND FIRST 10 YEARS

The Business Manager, George Russell gave a presentation covering the Company's performance for the past year and a review of the Company's commendable achievements since it was first set up 10 years ago. These include:

### Direct Provision as a housebuilder

- 316 quality affordable homes in 22 settlements
  - New build - 277 rent (92% of target); 12 shared equity pilot
  - Trickle Transfer - 27
  - Includes Respite Centre, Re-provisioning for Learning Difficulties & Adaptations
  - Includes temporary homeless - 33
  - Rent Deposit and Rent to Mortgage Pilot

### As an Agency for ELC

- 2 Day Centres, and library completed
- Further 179 new homes and Youth Homeless Project taken to detailed stage
- Range of other feasibility studies/negotiations for ELC

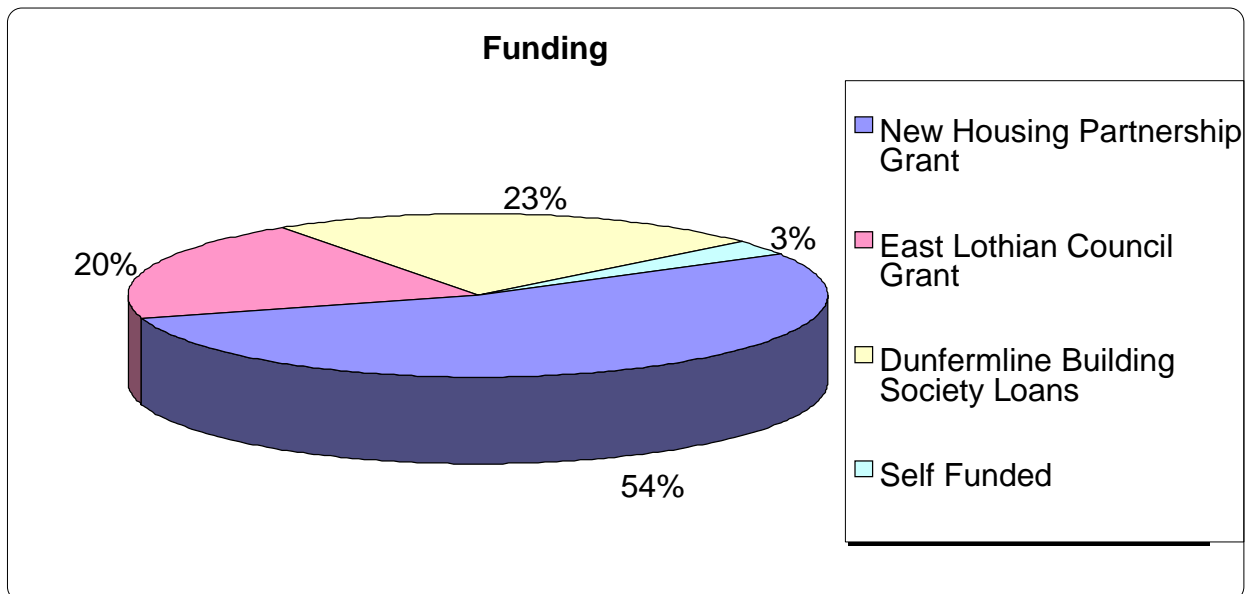
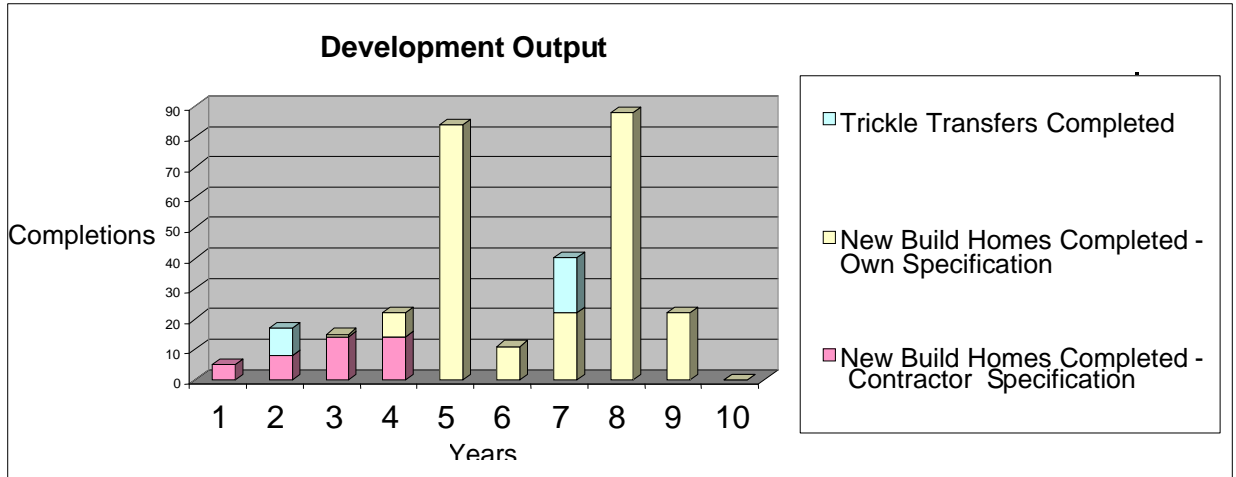
### Innovative Procurement

- Partnership: Hart Builders - flexible, efficient and effective
- Very low average development cost over 9 years programme
  - Development £56,679
  - Sites £ 5,603
  - Total: £62,282 (1% over target)
- Amongst lowest development costs in Edinburgh, Fife and Borders

### Communities

- Re-development of derelict brown-field sites and buildings
- Consultation
- Supporting schools, shops and other facilities

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER



## PRIORITIES FOR 2008/2009

### Governance

- Memorandum & Articles- implement
- Standing Orders & Committee structure-review
- Board Skills Audit-complete
- New directors-recruit
- Risk Management Strategy- review
- Internal Management Planning- develop

### Service

- Tenant Participation-conclude review+ develop Tenant Panel
- Rents- review structure
- Procurement- Reactive Repairs, Gas Heating Servicing/ Maintenance and Landscape Maintenance
- Trickle Transfers- conclude review of Investment Needs and implement programme

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER

## Any Changes? Prize Draw

### Keeping us up to date

In June we sent you all a brief questionnaire asking for any changes to your household or contact details in order to update the information we hold on you. We had 61 responses and the prize winners were:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize of £50 Voucher towards meal at the Maitlandfield Hotel, Haddington**  
**Helen Murray, Aberlady**
- 2nd prizes of £20 Tesco Voucher**  
**Graeme Lowe, North Berwick**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes of energy saving bulbs**  
**James Shaw, Aberlady**

**Why were we asking these questions?** The Company is aware that more and more tenants are using mobile phones and these telephone numbers change more frequently than landline numbers. It is vitally important that we and our Contractors have up to date details of how to contact you. **We have enclosed a further copy of the questionnaire with a return envelope** as we know there are still a large number of Tenants for whom we don't hold up to date contact information.

## Changes to Housing Benefit Rules

### Backdating

In some circumstances you may be able to request that your claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit is back dated, provided you are able to prove continuous 'good cause' for not making the claim earlier. Previously this could be for a period of up to 12 months. The rules have reduced this to **6 months** and to only **3 months** if you are of Pension Credit Age.

It is therefore extremely important that you submit a claim **as soon as** you think you may be entitled to help with your rent.

## Tenant Panel Meeting



**On Wednesday 12th November** we will be holding a meeting with our tenants who have agreed to be part of a Tenant Panel to look at :

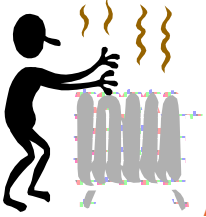
- ✓ the reprocurement of the Repairs and Maintenance Contract
- ✓ the reprocurement of the Gas Service and Maintenance Contract
- ✓ restructuring Rents
- ✓ reviewing a number of Housing Management policies such as
  - Rechargeable Repairs,
  - Estate Management,
  - Compensation for Improvement
  - Planned Maintenance
  - Tenant Participation

We will be contacting tenants who previously agreed to be part of the Tenant Panel and tenants who have indicated in the past that they would be interested in being more involved. **If you don't think this includes you and you would like to be part of the Panel** please let us know and you will receive an invite to the meeting.

If you would prefer not to attend a meeting but have any feedback you would like to give on any of these items or would still like to be involved in the review of Housing Management Policies please contact us. We can send the paperwork out for you to go through and your feedback will be considered along with the Panel's input.

**Please complete and remove the last page of this newsletter, ensuring you've filled in both sides and return to us using the enclosed envelope.**

# TENANTS NEWSLETTER



**Annual Gas Inspections**....if you can't keep the 1st appointment sent to you for your Annual Gas Service, please make sure that you phone Hepburn Engineering to advise them you can't be available **and** that you make another appointment at the same time. It is vitally important that your Service is carried out within a year of the previous inspection. As your landlord we have a legal duty to ensure that your gas central heating is safe and as a tenant you have a duty to allow access to your property for this important service.

## **Changes to Repairs Numbers**

East Lothian Council aim to gradually phase out all of the Freephone 0800 and Low-call 0845 service line numbers that come into their Contact Centre. These lines will then be replaced with standard 01875 numbers.

**For HOUSING REPAIRS Call  
01875 824311**

**This number should now be used to report any repair and replaces 0845 602 2223.**



## **Repairs Telephone Numbers**

### **1. DURING OFFICE HOURS**

Phone East Lothian Council's call centre on:

**01875 824311**



### **2. EMERGENCY REPAIRS**

Outside office hours for an **EMERGENCY** repair that cannot wait until the morning - Contact East Lothian Council's Property Service on their **Emergency Number**

**01875 612 818**

- for all EMERGENCY repairs except Gas Central Heating.

**PLEASE NOTE** - if you call out an emergency repair which is either your responsibility or which is not a genuine emergency, the cost of the call out and the repair will be charged back to you.

### **3. GAS CENTRAL HEATING**

Your gas central heating is covered by a contract with Hepburn Engineering and if you experience any problems with your system you should call

**0845 600 3455.**

If you think you can smell a gas leak, **NEVER** attempt to find a gas leak yourself. Instead contact **Scotia** immediately on the following number - **0800 111 999**

Telephone 01620 829300

Fax 01620 829993

email: [info@homesforlife.co.uk](mailto:info@homesforlife.co.uk)

Registered Social Landlord No.311 web : [www.homesforlife.co.uk](http://www.homesforlife.co.uk)

Registered Charity No.028542

Company Limited by Guarantee

Company Registration No. 188299

Please complete both sides and return to us using the enclosed envelope ->

## *Reply Slip for Meeting on Wednesday 12th November 6pm*

**Please complete this form along with the "Any Changes?" questionnaire on the other side and return it to us in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope by no later than 12 noon on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008.**

Please tick

I WILL be attend the meeting

I WILL be attending and I need help with transport to and from the meeting

I WILL be attending and I require help with childcare costs

I will NOT be attending but would like the Policies being reviewed sent out to me for my feedback

I will NOT be attending

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact `phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete both sides and return to us using the enclosed envelope ->

## "Any Changes ?"

### 1. Your Current Contact Details :

	You	Your Partner
Name		
Home Phone		
Mobile		
Work phone		
Email address		
Emergency Contact		

### 2. Who currently lives in your household?

Name	Relationship to You	Date of Birth	Lives permanently	Stays regularly
	You			

### 3. Is there anyone in your household who considers they have a disability?

Yes	No

If yes is this a physical or mental disability?

Physical	Mental

Is your home adapted to take account of this disability?

Yes	No

### 4. We will shortly be going out to tender for a Repairs Contractor. Would you be interested in being part of a group of tenants who will help decide what type of service we will be asking Contractors to provide?

Yes	No